

THE EUGENICS REVIEW

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"Eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally."

THE GALTON LUNCHEON 1940

President's Address on Eugenic Policy

THERE was an attendance of about fifty at the Galton Luncheon, which was held at St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster, on Saturday, February 17th, 1940, with The Rt. Hon. Lord Horder, G.C.V.O., M.D., President of the *Society*, in the chair.

Lord Horder's Address

Lord Horder said: Before I embark upon the few remarks which, against my own inclination and, as I now think, against my better judgment, I promised to make, I think we all have a duty as eugenists, and that is to rise for a few seconds in honour of the memory of a man who, British to the core, was recognized all over the world as having made not only a large but perhaps the greatest contribution that any individual has made to the eugenic idea—Havelock Ellis.

(The company stood in silence.)

Lord Horder continued: I am in somewhat of a difficulty. My remarks were primarily intended to be of a domestic kind. I was to say what was happening to our *Society* during war time and what our policy was; but we have some of our friends of the Press here, and they, of course, are not very much interested in our domestic affairs, nor should we like them perhaps to

blaze abroad any doubts that there may be in the minds of the Council and of the members of this *Society* as to exactly what eugenics stands for *at this point in human history*. We would like to put it to them that our activities were very well defined and extremely authentic. I have no doubt about their authenticity, I have a little doubt about their definition.

But first of all as to these domestic matters. Most of you know that after the initial concussion which the announcement of war brought to every group such as ours, when we had stabilized after the shock, we decided—and I hope everybody agrees—to carry on. We did this despite the absence of our General Secretary, Dr. C. P. Blacker, upon whom we lean so heavily and so justifiably, and despite the loss of others by reason of war work—witness the absence of Professor Crew, who should have given the Galton Lecture to-day—also despite the diminished income of the *Society*, the effect of the black-out and difficulties of transport, which of course affect our meetings and lectures. Despite all these things we decided to carry on, if only because we felt that in war, dysgenic though it is, and perhaps because war is so dysgenic, there are a number of ways in which the *Eugenics Society* might be helpful to the community.

We thought that there were opportunities as well as handicaps in the situation.

My colleague, the Chairman of the Council, reminds me of some of the good points to set against the bad ones. We had just completed Dr. Baker's researches, leading to the production and placing on the market of "Volpar." It remains to see whether clinically—you know what I mean by that term—Volpar comes up to the expectations of the laboratory worker. Well, that piece of work has been completed. The Darwin Fellows had just rounded off their respective pieces of research, and, thanks to our rather generous subsidy of the Population Investigation Committee and the Population Policies Committee, the work of those two committees was quite far advanced before this shock came upon us. So things might have been worse.

With regard to the programme that the Council proposes during war time, in the first place the REVIEW will be continued, the format remaining the same, though some diminution in size has become necessary. I am glad to tell you that the health of the Editor, Dr. Newfield (for whose gifts in this direction all of us have great admiration), which was rather precarious three months ago, is not nearly so precarious now. Then the members' meetings will continue; the approach of "Summer time" will make their continuance more practicable and we hope they will be popular. Propaganda is rather severely restricted by *force majeure*, the pressure coming mainly from our valued Treasurer; but it is not shut down, it will continue.

We have just appointed a Committee for the study of the eugenic aspects of family allowances. That Committee will, of course, make contacts with other bodies, such as the Family Endowment Society, pursuing the question actively. All sorts of movements bear upon this important question of family allowances. There is no system yet, no large rounded policy on the part of the Government in this respect, and therefore the Council thought that, especially now when this question is so pertinent, it would be good that we should have an *ad hoc*

committee to inquire into the whole position from the eugenic angle.

Then, of course, family allowances are linked up very closely with the question of war marriages and pensions. We have also to watch certain matters which might easily, if they were not watched—or even perhaps if they were—lapse and be neglected, matters which we believe to be very important from our angle. One is the question of the census. Is it really in the public interest, even in war time, that the census should be waived? We want to consider that. We have to watch the Chancellor of the Exchequer in view of his quite reasonable desire to get the money to pay £6 or £7 millions a day for this gigantic effort which the Allies are making. We have to watch him when he does such extraordinary things as to lower the income tax allowances for married people and children—an extraordinary piece of legislation. I have a letter from Sir John Simon in answer to an inquiry from myself in which I took the liberty of saying that the Council of the *Eugenics Society* was amazed at this particular clause in the Finance Bill. I am not going to burden you with that letter but it seems to amount to this, that in scaling down a number of benefits this particular benefit was included. We think it should have been excluded. We think that at a time when the Government should be concerning itself with the downward trend in population, income tax allowances for married people and for children should at least have been excepted, even if only on principle. The amount which the Chancellor hopes to get by this extraordinary piece of legislation is negligible, but the principle is not negligible.

I return to the question of propaganda. What are we going to do about propaganda? The original title of our *Society*, as Mrs. Grant Duff reminds me, was the "Eugenics Education Society." The name was changed because it was thought that research was as important as education, if not for a time more important. It is chiefly our financial position which compels us to reduce propaganda activity for a time, but I am going to suggest that there is another reason why propaganda activity

should be, if not reduced, controlled rather severely.

Are we sufficiently clear upon what it is that we should just now educate the people eugenically? It is easy to propagandize—God knows how easy it is! You can propagandize to such an extent that the word becomes very ill-odorous. It is so simple to try to educate people, so difficult to be certain of the truth and permanence of the things on which you educate them. Of course, some of us who have had scientific training are quite sure of our biological principles, but it is difficult to get biological principles over to people who have not had scientific training, because as soon as you depart from your biological nomenclature you run the risk of not telling them the truth. When we get down to the human problem—biologically it is not difficult with horses and dogs and chickens and pigs—the elusiveness of it comes home to us. Supposed as I am to be quite confident about my outlook on eugenics, the elusiveness of the problem nevertheless strikes me in a way which makes me somewhat sceptical as to what at this time in the history of the nation and the race we should call eugenics education.

Our Treasurer, in answer to the invitation which I sent to members of the Council, has given me his outlook upon this particular point, and I am going to quote him. He says: "So long as one is content to keep the good and the bad far enough apart, all goes well. It is so obvious that the bigger vitality, the mental and physical range of some men and women, immeasurably outstrips the similar qualities of others, so that the choice between good and bad is never in doubt." But he goes on to say: "It is easy for the animal breeder who has stumbled upon better types in quite short periods, because he can fertilize many females by one male and eliminate non-desirable types. That is easy, but in the human animal it is a different matter. The moment we get down to definitions, to the separation of genetic from environmental factors, the problem becomes one for scientific analysis, for experiment, for criticism, and for research." I

am bound to say that I am sympathetic with our Treasurer over that aspect of our eugenic problem. One or two generously-minded members of the Council suggested that I should give the Galton Lecture in the place of Professor Crew. If I were giving the Galton Lecture this is exactly the problem I should deal with. I should try to examine the whole field. In Galton's day it was not so difficult as it is in ours. Galton was an anthropologist of great distinction, he was a pioneer in the anthropometric field. And, by the way, what has happened to anthropometry in these days? Why are we not measuring people and weighing them and noting the colour of their eyes and hair as he did? The Swedes are doing it. In Sweden to-day a book can be bought which tells the reader what is the normal Swede, what is the healthy Swede, healthy physically, and from intelligence tests and so on. The Swede has got himself "taped," we have not; we know much less about the British type to-day than Galton did in his.

Turning now to the question of environment, many of you remember the flutter in the dovecot when Julian Huxley gave the Galton Lecture. I will confess to you that I found Julian Huxley's Galton Lecture not devoid of fallacies, though at the same time full of healthy criticism, because in effect he said, "we eugenists must take more note of environmental factors." Very well, but is it true that environmental effort to-day may lead to eugenic benefits to-morrow? To what extent is it true, if it be true at all? That was Julian Huxley's major premise. We all know that if a number of growing boys and girls are given an extra milk ration, their stature, their weight, their health, and even their intelligence can be increased; but between that and the implication that you will improve—what says our Founder?—"the racial qualities of future generations," between those two positions a great gap lies and only by research can the gap be filled. Critics have accused us eugenists of decrying the social services. I say quite boldly in reply that this is not true. We have never decried the social services. We have never put any

drag on the wheel of those who are trying to improve human conditions through environmental agency. I myself have been preaching the amenities to my fellow citizens for years, though nobody listens very much ; but that does not prevent me from being intensely interested in the eugenic problem, which is a different one, and I think we are getting these things somewhat confused.

The critics also accuse us of making class distinctions. Well, I am quite as much interested in one class as another, as I believe we all are. What we want is the truth on this question. None of us, I take it, have any bias or prejudice against blue blood or red blood or pale green blood, but if a certain class, *qua* class, produces through heredity, as distinct from environment, a better race, then we have got to accept that, be it the poor, the middle, or the upper class. But I do not think that as eugenists we are very much worried about the sociological distinctions between the classes.

Should we at this stage of eugenics "go into committee," as the saying is, over this whole question of the geneticists' standpoint? You will remember the manifesto of the biologists who answered the question put to them by the Science Service of Washington, "how could the world population be improved most effectively genetically?" The manifesto was published in *Nature* last September, and it was commented on very fairly, I think, by Dr. Newfield in the October issue of the REVIEW. The gist of the manifesto seems to be that until you have given people equal opportunities, until you have removed race prejudices, until you have given children a better field for upbringing, until you have disseminated knowledge of birth control, until you have effected permanent sterilization, until there has been a wider spread of knowledge of biological principles, until, finally, there is conscious selection which requires an accurate direction or directions for such selection to take—until you have done all these things, the manifesto says, you cannot begin to do anything with eugenics. Well, I dissent entirely, and I think this manifesto from these distinguished

scientists, beginning with our potential Galton Lecturer, Professor Crew, and ending with Professor Waddington, with 22 names in between, is a confusion of the issue. I believe eugenists to have a scope and a field quite apart from environmentalists, and I believe that our "Eugenic Aims and Objects," which were revised last year, and which appear in our report, still indicate a great scope for eugenics. There are problems which are not environmental in essence, there are problems which have to do with heredity, there are problems which concern all the efforts that could be made to improve the stock. They are all stated in our "Eugenic Aims and Objects," and although these overlap again and again with social services and with environmental efforts for human betterment, they are essentially genetic in their implication.

I said at the beginning that war is dysgenic. We are agreed about that. It is estimated that there were half-a-million births sacrificed as a result of the last war. The number of births that will be sacrificed this time nobody knows, because we do not know how long the war will last. But war is dysgenic because those 500,000 births would have been amongst the more desirable, and not the less desirable, of parents. In other words, the war results in a lowering of fertility in the very stocks that we eugenists want to encourage, and it leaves the fertility in the less desirable stocks relatively untouched. *That is the special problem presented to us eugenists by the war*, and it is one more reason, if another reason were necessary, why the activities of our *Society* should continue during the national emergency.

That is all I have to say. It was suggested that there should be a short discussion, and I think that is desirable. Probably you will think it reasonable if I restrict the speeches to five minutes each.

Discussion

Mr. B. S. Bramwell thanked the President for giving such an interesting talk. They all felt it a great loss not to have Professor Crew with them on that occasion, but he

hoped that his Galton Lecture would be given at some future date and that also another address might be forthcoming from the President. The expression of his doubts by Lord Horder had been most stimulating. He had shown an open mind, the mind of one who was ready to learn at any age.

There was one question on which he desired to say a word or two, namely, war marriages. On considering it from the point of view of a citizen, his own opinion was that where young people had had a definite attachment to each other they should take the risk and get married, but from the point of view of a eugenicist that did not carry very far unless they were going to have children. That brought one up against the question of what was to be the future of the children. It might sound rather brutal in a way, but he thought the position of the offspring of a war marriage when the husband had been killed was more important than the position of a widow. They could all sympathize with the childless widow so far as her loss was concerned, it was a tremendous blow to her life, but from an economic point of view he did not know that she had suffered so much hardship. These young people should be encouraged to have at any rate one child, and where the husband might be killed in a few weeks he thought the state should be very liberal to the orphans, even possibly at the expense of the childless widow. The point was one, however, that would need a good deal of "rubbing in" to the politicians, because widows had votes and children of tender years had not.

The Hon. Mrs. Grant Duff said that she felt very deeply indeed that the *Eugenics Society* had work to do in war time which was even more important, if possible, than the work it did in peace. In "Eugenic Aims and Objects" the *Society's* work was described as being educational and research, endeavouring to ensure for the future of humanity the very best things that eugenics stood for. Any work that they could do to make people realize more about these things and their effect upon the future of humanity was not only worth while, but

even more worth while in war time than in peace.

Mrs. Neville Rolfe said that she was one of those who attached very great importance to public opinion, and she felt it vitally necessary that the *Eugenics Society* during the war should make the broad principles of eugenics known, particularly to the younger generation. She quite agreed that there were a number of technical points still undecided. It must be remembered that there was a time lag of about thirty years between the findings in the laboratory and the practise of the man in the street. The principles of eugenics and the biological principles that affected the development of living things, plant, animal, and human were known, but even to-day the majority of the schools taught no biology. It was vital that biological principles as related to human problems should be part of the equipment of every young person in the community. Herein was a vital activity in which the *Eugenics Society* should be engaged during the war, when the potential parents of the future were grouped together in the fighting forces. The ideals of eugenics, with the human responsibilities they involved, as affecting behaviour, as affecting selection of partners in marriage, as affecting parenthood, were vital matters on which information should be given to the "under thirties" in the Defence Forces, munition services, and so forth. As a believer in education, which was the democratization of knowledge, she considered that in this respect the *Eugenics Society* to-day had a great responsibility if due weight was to be given during the war to the technical knowledge available, because, unless the young people were interested, unless there was understanding and appreciation of the position, that technical knowledge would take very much longer to become a useful factor in the mental equipment of the community. The means were various, the broadcast, literature, the Press—there were various angles of approach to-day in which the broad principles of the responsibility of the individual for the future quantity and quality of the race could be stated and brought

home. The result would be to give to individuals at one and the same time the feeling of freedom and of responsibility.

Mrs. How-Martyn wished to emphasize the point that had been raised about the children of war marriages and about possible war orphans. The position made it incumbent upon them to push forward with the idea of children's allowances. In her own view not only should there be allowances, but every mother should be given a vote for each child under sixteen years of age in addition to a vote for herself. It would be better to give the vote to the mother because she would probably pay more attention to it than would the father, and a woman who had votes for her children would be listened to by the House of Commons.

Lady Chambers said that having been a member of the *Society* from its inception, she had always been extremely interested in its educational work. She felt it important to "get over" to the man in the street the existence of such a thing as race responsibility and its imperative demands upon every individual. If that could be got into his mind, the sinews of war in the shape of subscriptions would be forthcoming. This was a *Society* which included scientific workers doing investigation in a subject which, as they confessed, they did not understand completely, but, in so far as they understood it, they wished to give their help to those who needed it and to circulate the knowledge which was of such vast importance to the community. She had always looked on the *Society* as a means of distributing over a large area the work of the greater minds who were concerned with this subject of eugenics and population, and so to make more people understand in this country and in all countries the fact of racial responsibility and the need for continuing the race from their best stocks. In order to do this she thought they should encourage the marriage of all people who were likely to be good parents both physically and mentally and from the character point of view.

Mr. Cecil Binney (Barrister-at-Law) said

that there was no question of the *Society* deserting its ideals, but it was extremely difficult during war time to get people to pay attention to more important things, and it might be that to that extent eugenics was rather at a standstill. He spoke as one who had been converted, not so much by the *Society* as by the logic of events as he witnessed them. It had been an admirable idea to hold the Galton Luncheon, for although it could not be said that the *Society* had embarked on any new policy, yet it was paying tribute to the fact that eugenics was a live subject of supreme importance for the community, and that the work of the *Society* must go on. Obviously, as a result of the war, new problems arose and old problems became accentuated, so that although they might have diminished resources and less leisure yet they did have greater opportunities. He felt that by taking an interest in the *Eugenics Society* during war they were helping to keep alive a great movement and one which might well be in days to come of greater importance in world affairs than the things which engaged the minds of statesmen at the moment. Finally he wanted to say how much he appreciated what Lord Horder had done to maintain the *Society* at a useful level during this exceedingly difficult time.

Mr. Gun (Society of Genealogists) said that it was an enormous pity that the B.B.C. could not arrange for talks of the kind that they had before the war. Nowadays every talk over the wireless seemed as if it must have direct relation to our war effort. Yet a proper teaching of eugenics was necessary especially in view of the mad racial theories which were now prevalent on the Continent. Whether they could carry the war into the enemy's territory and show that if eugenics was properly studied the race of gangsters who now infested certain parts of Europe might never have arisen he did not know. But he thought that something on those lines must be tried, and he agreed most thoroughly with Mrs. Neville Rolfe that good heredity must be ensured as far as possible if nations were to be free instead of slaves.

Mrs. Hubback (Principal of Morley College) desired to associate herself with Mr. Bramwell and others in thanking Lord Horder for the work he continually did for the *Society*. She had, unfortunately for herself, a very wide experience of voluntary associations of every kind and of their presidents. She knew those presidents who were merely decorative and those who in addition worked. Their own President was one of the latter. He attended all committee meetings and followed every detail of the *Society's* work. Busy man as he was, he gave not only of his time but of his mind. She wanted to base this tribute on a wider ground because they were grateful to Lord Horder, not only for the work he did for the *Society* but also for what he did for so many good causes, some of them unpopular. She wished to praise Lord Horder's courage even more than his ability and conscientiousness, for it required much courage to speak as he did for some causes that were with many people almost a subject of levity.

Lord Horder had pointed out that one of the chief tasks immediately in front of the *Eugenics Society* was to inquire into the eugenic aspect of family allowances. Many who had been working for these for twenty years or so felt that they were at last becoming practical politics. This was so mainly because many people regarded it as a solution of one of the greatest economic problems of the war, the problem of the vicious spiral, the problem of ensuring that the children in families with small incomes did not suffer unduly from the economic hardships of war, and of seeing that the national income—that part of it which could be spent—was most wisely spent. That, of course, was not the aspect from which eugenicists primarily wanted to look at it. If family allowances came about—and she for one firmly believed that they were coming—they were bound to come as a poverty-relieving scheme, and they were bound to be at a flat rate. But those who were supporting a scheme along those lines were doing so because they felt that it was of the utmost importance that the principle should be registered. Once family allowances

were the law of the land, it was essential that any particular schemes which were ultimately adopted in this country should have a eugenic tendency.

Many of them deeply regretted the prospect of a declining population, and she believed that family allowances had a contribution to make in that respect. But she wanted to make it clear that the greatest "whole-hoggers" amongst them, while believing in family allowances, did not believe that such allowances, whatever the scheme put forward, would by themselves bring about any rise in the birth-rate. It was a fact that the birth-rate had not risen to any appreciable extent in countries which had got family allowances already. That, however, was neither here nor there, because hardly any country had family allowances of such an amount as to cover the cost of a child, and if the scheme was to have any effect on the birth-rate the allowances must be sufficient to cover that cost at different economic levels. But even if that kind of scheme were ultimately achieved, they must recognize that family allowances at their best could only be one of the factors that might lead parents to wish to increase their families. The other factor was the question of public opinion, to which Mrs. Neville Rolfe referred so eloquently. It was necessary, especially in view of the successful researches in contraceptive technique, to make people realize that having children was not entirely their own affair. Some men looked on having children as others might look on having dogs or pigeons, a thing entirely for themselves. The attitude which it was necessary to get across in order to bring about an increase in the birth-rate was that having children was not an affair of the parents only but an affair of the community. If that feeling of responsibility were encouraged, then it must be made possible economically for people to have the children. They must remove the financial burden of parenthood or help to relieve it before they could ask people to look upon childbearing as a matter which affected the whole nation. This was not an easy subject, and that was why those who believed in

family allowances were extremely glad that the *Society* was prepared to face up to the problem and to make available its resources, first of all for an inquiry, and when the inquiry was finished, for whatever action might be necessary.

Lord Horder said that he was very grateful to Mrs. Hubback for what he took to be in essence a vote of thanks. He was not unwilling to believe that whatever he might have done in respect of various activities which in his judgment contributed to human health and happiness had been the result of courage rather than of intelligence! Of the two qualities it was perhaps of courage that there was the greater lack. A friend of his—he called him a friend, but he rather thought the intention of his speech was not too

friendly—once said of him that he seemed to be interested in everything from birth control to cremation. He accepted that compliment at its face value. He was a doctor and therefore his interest did begin with birth, and even before birth, and as to the disposal of the human body after death, that also was a matter of sanitation, if nothing else.

He hoped that those present generally would agree with Mr. Binney that it had been worth holding this Luncheon. Although it might not have made any constructive addition to their policy as eugenists, it had demonstrated that they were alive, and that they were bent upon extracting from this evil thing, war, whatever good may accrue to their fellow human beings.

ABORTION—RIGHT OR WRONG? *

By DOROTHY THURTLE

*Author of the Minority Statement in the Report of the
Inter-Departmental Committee on Abortion*

Origin of Inter-Departmental Committee

THE disappointing results of the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity led to the appointment, in 1928, of an Inter-Departmental Committee with the following terms of reference: "To advise upon the application to maternal mortality and morbidity of the medical and surgical knowledge at present available and to enquire into the needs and direction of further research work." This Committee finally reported in 1932, and subsequently a further investigation was undertaken by medical officers of the Ministry of Health, who paid visits to various centres and made a detailed examination of actual conditions, and of the working of the 1918 Act. The results of this investigation were published in 1937, and although the 1928 Committee made reference to abortion, the medical

officers went further and recommended that an examination should be made into the influence which abortion may exert on maternal mortality and morbidity and future child-bearing.

The Inter-Departmental Committee on Abortion was accordingly set up in May, 1937. It consisted of fifteen members, of which five were women. Of these five, four were titled women and the fifth was myself. Two were doctors. One of the women doctors resigned at an early stage, for domestic reasons, her place being taken by a male barrister, so that four women only served on the Committee for most of the time. The male members were two barristers, one being the Chairman, Mr. Norman Birkett, three gynaecologists, one medical officer of health, the chief London magistrate, one coroner, one prosecuting solicitor, and a representative each from the Ministry of Health and the Home Office.

Memoranda was submitted by individuals

* Substance of a paper read at a meeting of the *Eugenics Society* on March 19th, 1940.